



# DEPARTMENT MEMORANDUM

2006-051

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## Program Information

### Family Preservation Court for Pre-Filing Referrals

Program(s) Impacted			
<b>X</b>	Children Services		Adult Services
	GAIN		Child Care
	CalWORKs		Foster Care
	Food Stamps		Medi-Cal
	General Relief		Refugee

**From** Sharrell Blakeley, Assistant Director

**Purpose** The purpose of this Department Memorandum (DM) is to inform staff of a new service available for pre-filing referrals. The initiation of pre-filing Family Preservation Court, formerly known as pre-filing Drug Court, will provide additional resources to Children's Social Service Workers (CSSWs) in order to prevent the need for removal. Pre-Filing Drug Court is a voluntary preventative program clients may participate in to eliminate the need for the loss of custody and/or the need to file a petition with the Juvenile Court.

**Background** Grant funding has allowed for the creation of the Family Preservation Court (FPC) as a collaborative effort between multiple agencies, including Mental Health System's Center for Change, Riverside County Juvenile Court, and the Department of Public Social Services (DPSS). FPC offers intensive services to clients with substance abuse issues and is a derivative of post-filing Drug Court. However, by addressing pre-filing referrals, families are afforded an opportunity to address drug-related issues that may pose significant safety and risk factors to the child(ren) in the home prior to the need for detention. Through a client's active participation in FPC, removal of the child(ren) from the home may be prevented, and further need for DPSS intervention may be entirely eliminated. This program is similar, in concept, to Differential Response.

**Policy** Emergency Response (ER) CSSWs shall screen clients that may be appropriate for FPC and refer them to the Center for Change for intake. Depending upon the client's response, once referred to FPC, the ER CSSW shall complete an assessment to determine if continued risk and safety factors merit further involvement or if the referral may be closed.

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#### Services Offered Through FPC

Participants of FPC are required to engage in the following services:

- attendance at weekly judicial supervision meetings
- twelve (12) months of outpatient substance abuse treatment (Referral to residential or detox when necessary)
- twelve (12) week Nurturing Families Program (parenting) with specialized groups for fathers
- ten (10) week gender specific educational series to strengthen family communication and parenting skills
- life-skills program
- relapse prevention
- community service referrals including access to child care and bus tickets
- HUD housing referrals
- frequent and random substance abuse testing
- daily check-in with case managers (during initial phases)

#### Criteria for Suitable Participants

Any client that has a history of substance abuse issues would be eligible for FPC, however, the following list of criteria provides additional guidance in determining the most suitable candidates:

- the parents are at-risk of losing their child(ren) due to substance abuse issues
- the client has acknowledged some level of substance abuse history and is willing to engage in the program
- there is no history of violent behavior, or other factors, that would threaten the safety of FPC staff
- there are no immediate safety issues which require the removal of the child(ren)
- SDM risk assessment yields Moderate or High Risk, but **does not** indicate Very High Risk

**Note:** FPC does fulfill Prop 36 requirements, therefore a client who has been ordered Prop 36 completion would be eligible to participate, with approval of their assigned probation officer.

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#### Referral Process

The Family Preservation Court Consent to Obtain and Release Information form also serves as the referral paperwork to the program. See Attachment 1 for referral form. The following table outlines the steps necessary in completing a referral to FPC.

Step	The CSSW shall...
1	Identify potential clients and consult with a Children's Social Services Supervisor (CSSS) prior to referral to determine appropriateness. <b>Note:</b> Only SDM outcomes of Moderate or High risk are appropriate for referral. Very High risk cases will not be accepted.
2	Review the consent to release and obtain information with the client, then have them sign and date the form. The CSSW shall also sign the form in the designated location.
3	Complete the "Referring Agency" section at the bottom of the form. <b>Note:</b> Be sure to legibly include the fax number as the Center for Change will <b>only</b> refer to this number for correspondence.
4	Inform the client of the closest intake location, as designated on the referral form, and indicate the following business day as their appointment time. (Refer to Attachment 1 for locations and intake times).
5	Fax the referral form to the appropriate Center for Change office, as indicated on the referral form, and retain the hard copy for the file.
6	Enter a contact in the Case Management section of CWS/CMS detailing the time and date the referral was faxed, as well as the date and location the client was sent for intake.
7	Create a contact in CWS/CMS documenting when a response from the Center for Change is received, either indicating the client successfully completed intake, or the client failed to show.
8	Assess the referral for further services and upon receipt of the Compliance Report from the Center for Change, create a contact in the Case Management section of CWS/CMS documenting when the Compliance Report was received. See Attachment 2 for sample Compliance Report.

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**Program Information**

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## Family Preservation Court for Pre-Filing Referrals, Continued

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**Communication  
Regarding  
Client Intake  
and  
Participation**

The Center for Change will provide the CSSW with:

- notice that the client did or did not attend the intake,
- notice that the client has been or has not been enrolled in the FPC program (2 weeks following the intake appointment), and
- notice of the client's continued progress via fax and telephone.

The Center for Change will drop a client from the program, and contact the CSSW, in the manner described below, if any of the conditions outlined in the table occur.

<b>If the client...</b>	<b>then the Center for Change will...</b>
does not show to the initial intake appointment	fax the referral form back to the CSSW, at the fax number provided on the form, with the box checked, "Did not appear for intake."
is not accepted into the FPC program	fax a letter of non-enrollment to the CSSW, at the fax number provided.
fails to appear for three (3) consecutive appointments	contact the CSSW via phone or fax and proceed to drop the client from the program.
fails the program at any time	call the Central Intake Center (CIC) and make a report. <b>Note:</b> This may not necessarily generate a referral, but documentation will be made in CWS/CMS.

**FPC Probation  
Period**

In order to ensure optimum benefit of the program, FPC requires that each participant complete a 2-week, mandatory probationary period. During this time, clients must attend every appointment and check in with their assigned case manager on a daily basis. Failure to do so will result in their dismissal from the program.

After the completion of the mandatory 2-week probation period, the Center for Change will provide the CSSW with a Compliance Report indicating that the client has officially been accepted into the program. If the referral is still open, the CSSW shall reassess for the need of further intervention, then either close the referral or promote to case, as applicable.

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#### Court Officer Responsibilities

Each FPC will have one DPSS court officer in attendance at weekly meetings. Pre-Filing and Post-Filing FPC clients will be integrated at all service functions, including weekly court meetings. Therefore, the court officer shall serve in the following capacities:

- function as the primary liaison between the FPC team and DPSS to assess individualized and systemic progress and concerns, and
- provide consultation to the FPC team in situations where further ER intervention may be necessary.

**Note:** Should the FPC team decide that a mandated child abuse report is necessary, the FPC **case manager** shall be designated to make the call to the hotline. This does not override any other mandatory requirements for the court officer.

#### Forms

The following table identifies new, revised or obsolete forms described in this DM.

Revises	Refers	Obsoletes
n/a	Family Preservation Court Referral Form	n/a
n/a	Compliance Report	n/a

#### CWS/CMS Data Entry Requirements and Impact

The CSSW shall enter a contact into the Contact Notebook section of CWS/CMS to document any of the following:

- the time and date the initial referral was faxed to the Center for Change,
- whether the client attended the initial intake session, and
- the information contained in the Compliance Report, if the referral remains open when the report is received.

#### Impact on CSH

This policy modifies:

- Module 2, Chapter 1, Section B, and
- Module 7, Chapter 3, Section A of the Children's Services Handbook.

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#### Attachments

Attached to this DM are the Following:

- Attachment 1 – The Family Preservation Court Consent to Obtain and Release Client Information and Program Referral
- Attachment 2 – Mental Health Systems Compliance Report
- Attachment 3 – FPC Flow Chart

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#### Contact Information

For additional information or clarification, supervisors may contact Sandra Thomas Perez in the Policy Unit.

**Note:** Social workers shall present all questions to their immediate supervisor. If the supervisor is unable to answer the question, the supervisor may contact the program specialist.

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AG/stp